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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

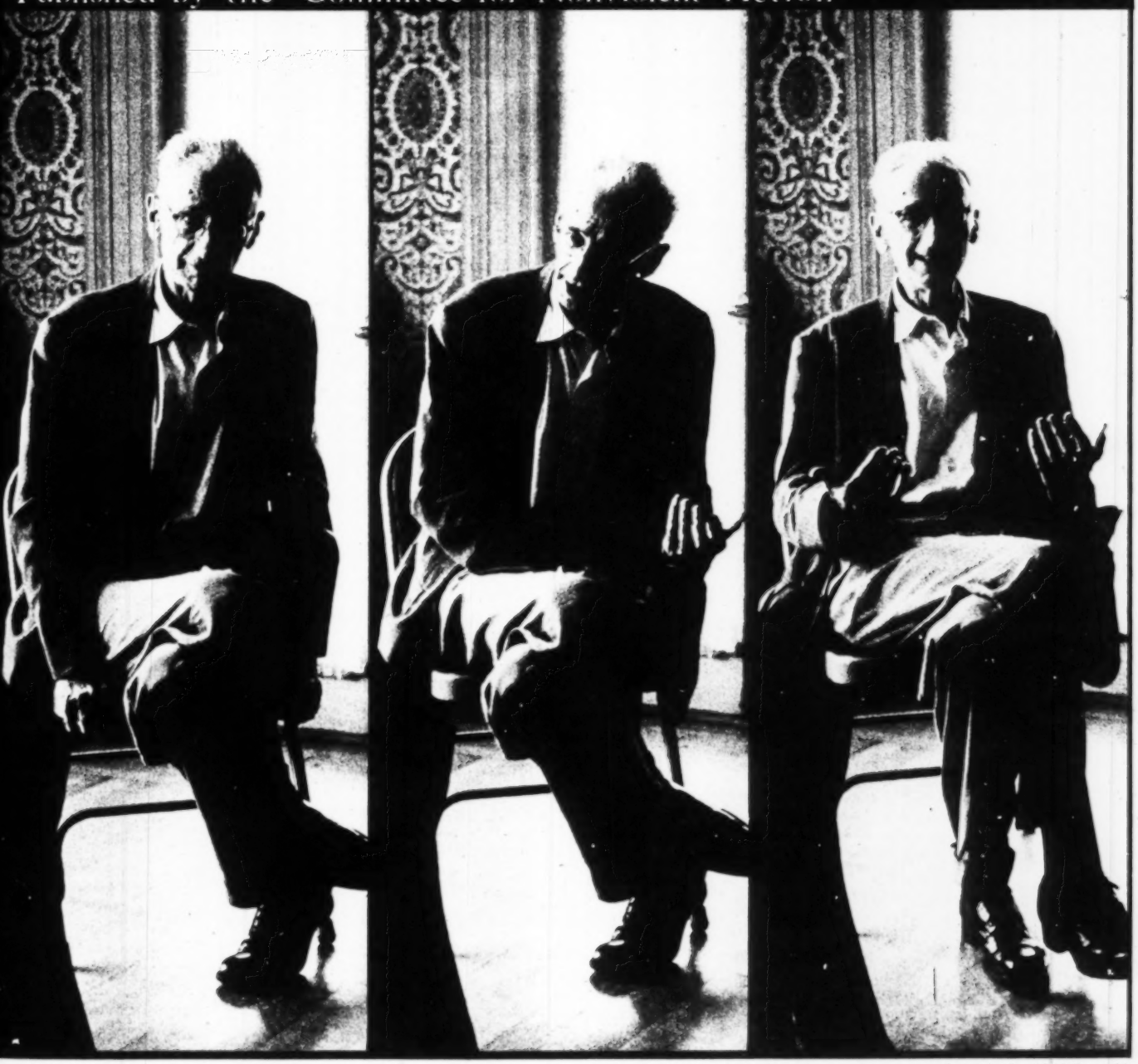
WIN

PEACE & FREEDOM THROUGH NONVIOLENT ACTION

A. J. Muste

1885-1967

Published by the Committee for Nonviolent Action



—photos by David McReynolds

Abraham Johannes Muste died Saturday, February 11, 1967. He was 82 years old. On Saturday morning, he felt pains in his side and back. A doctor could find nothing seriously wrong but advised him to go to the hospital for tests. He was taken by ambulance accompanied by Joyce Gilmore. He suffered a heart stoppage at 3:30 and lost consciousness. A. J. Muste died at about 6:30 p.m. His body was cremated on Monday, February 13. He is survived by three sisters, a brother, two of his three children, and eight grandchildren. His son, John Muste, is a professor of English at Ohio State University and his daughter, Nancy Baker, lives in Thornwood, N.Y. Another daughter, Constance Hamilton, died early last year and A.J.'s wife, Anna, died in 1954 at the age of 67.

I learned of A.J. Muste's death at 5:00 a.m. on Sunday morning, February 12. He had died Saturday evening but I had been at dinner with friends and could not be reached. The news of A.J.'s death came to me as I had felt, for some months, that it would. I read it in the New York Times which I had brought home with me and was reading before going to sleep. I had no premonition of A.J.'s death, but I had felt there would be no lingering illness, no extended period of gradually weakening powers—just that one day he would be in the office and the next day I should pick up the paper and read his obituary.

A.J. Muste was an old man when he died, though none of us were ever able to think of him as old. I will not say he died because he gave himself so freely for the causes in which he believed. He died because he was old and, if anything, the heavy and relentless schedule he kept to the very end was exactly what had given him good health and abundant spirits. I did not weep when I read the obituary. I was stunned and half unbelieving and it was very late and I slept. I dreamed of A.J. that night and the next—as if the unconscious mind was trying to come to terms with what I could not, consciously, accept. The only time I came close to breaking down was on Monday, February 13th, when I ran into Barbara Deming at the meeting which had been planned to launch the Spring Mobilization and which was turned into a Memorial Meeting. Barbara took my hand and then suddenly we embraced and I held her very close and realized the death was real and all of us would have to go on now without A.J.

Tom Cornell said—and I agree—that "we are all sons of A.J." We were also his lieutenants. But we were not, in the sense the word is usually used, his disciples. We were co-workers and comrades as well as being his children. To the degree I am anything politically it would be a "Musteite"—and yet, even as I would accept that title, I would point out that my disagreements with A.J. were public knowledge. With other leaders it would have been impossible to disagree, in private or public, without being cast into outer darkness. A.J. taught me not only that I had the right to disagree with the leader—and he was our leader—but that he expected that disagreement of us.

I am glad now about a very small thing. Despite a certain political drift away from A.J. in the last year or so of his life, I am among the 60 or more people who can always have a special (and vain and human) pride that we were arrested with A.J. Muste on his last act of civil disobedience.

A. J. belonged to many people. He made friends across impossible ideological boundries. He belonged to Presbyterians and Communists, to Catholics and Trotskyists, to Quakers and Anarchists. He belonged, in a certain way, to all of us who ever worked with him at one point or another in his life. But in a special way he belonged to young people. It was appropriate that when WBAI arranged a spur-of-the-moment memorial broadcast the night after his death, those who could be reached and could make a midnight radio show were all under 40. Most of us grow impatient in talking with younger radicals. Sooner or later we burst out with an imperious, irritated "When you have been in the movement as long as I have you won't make such a silly statement." Never once, in the more than 15 years that I knew A.J., did he ever take that tack with those of us who disagreed with him. He would listen to us, try to persuade us, and then, if we still disagreed, he accepted that we must find our own way and perhaps that way might prove to have greater merit than his own. In any event, every man had to follow where the light led him. Most of us talk at or down to young people or to political opponents. A.J. talked with every person he encountered. More important, he listened.

When A.J. Muste died his name was not known to everyone in the peace and civil rights movement. He was not a man with a dramatic flair. His writing lacked fire and his platform manner was just short of being a really good orator. And, I might add, A.J. was capable of balancing off his capacity for brilliant analysis with a sometimes baffling capacity to make tactical mistakes. I put these things down because, as a Musteite I want no legends or worship to blur the reality of this man and what he meant to us. He was human. He was fallible. Often his followers disagreed with him. And often enough the followers were right and the leader was wrong. Why, then, was this man our leader, accepted by us all?

Perhaps it was because A.J. was a whole and natural man. He was the most "manly" man I have ever met in my life. Man enough to be gentle, to love poetry, to combine a rock-hard adherence to his political position with great compassion in the midst of conflict for his opponent. A.J. was a tough old bird—tough enough to love us all.

Perhaps it was because A.J. carried with him the peculiar mark of greatness—he had no time for petty gossip. He did have time for sunsets and a movie, for poetry and a dinner with friends, for following the baseball scores and for laughing. But he never in the years I knew him had time for bitter words about another person. The only other man I have known in my life who literally "had no time" for personal attacks on others is Norman Thomas. Norman is the liberal, A.J. was the eternal radical, the revolutionist, yet both men had this wonderful ability to discuss their opponents' political positions without discussing their opponents' personal faults. My anger over the war is such that I direct it to Johnson personally, in terms of his cowardice and dishonesty. A.J. was "foolish" enough to believe that somewhere inside Lyndon John-

■ I first came to appreciate A.J. Muste—as the True Foxy Granpa—the morning after my first night in jail (15-16 June 1955). He had been arrested with about 26 others for sitting down on a bench in City Hall Park during a "practice air raid" in which people were required by State law to take cover between certain siren patterns. I had been picked up at the same time for continuing to picket around the perimeter of the park with a sign calling attention to the Real Danger: Fallout. All of us had been slapped with enormous bail (can it really have been five or ten thousand apiece?) & called (by Bob Wagner's pal & Best Man, Judge Hyman Bushel) murderers—for not having gone & stood in doorways to escape theoretical H-bomb blast & heat effects (or was it just the radiation?).

When we were let out into the common cell, there was A.J. sitting in the sunlight on a table, shrewdly analyzing the morning Times, surrounded by fellow demonstrators. God knows on what items the old man exercised his wit & perspicacity that morning! I only remember my pleased astonishment at realizing that this "Grand Old Man of the Pacifist Movement" was a witty analyst of the currents of absurdity running thru the present into the future, a brilliant "contemporary historian."

Previously, he had always appeared to me as one of the stereotypes in which he habitually disguised himself in order to get some job done. Knowing little about his Marxist years or his personal anarchism, I ("a relatively pacific anarchist") suspected A.J.'s pacifism because it came from an established Christian bag & mine was rooted in Freud, Reich, Goodman, & secular (Kropotkinist) anarchism. But that morning in the Tombs I became an A.J.-watcher. I stopped going home when the speeches began after walks; I'd wait to hear what A.J. had to say.

He always had some cat to let out of the bag—some juicy bit he'd pulled with rough strife thorough the iron grates of the media or blithely culled from the Times. No matter how shitty we'd thought we'd realized the big boys were, that old scarecrow—as calmly as if he were giving a daring sermon on self-reliance—would stand out on the swords-into-plowshares steps & demonstrate that our rulers are rogues, liars, murderers. The only way he lasted as long as he did was by disguising himself as a skinny old preacher who couldn't (could he?) really be meaning what he said—with a policeman right there & all?

So if Ho impressed him as a mensch & not just a photogenic old Stalinist leftover thrown into a becoming victim's role by the U.S. Monster—that bit of inconsistency (for a libertarian) is, to me, a datum. If A.J., who knew that every state stinks of violence & that every organization may become a self-aggrandizing, exploitative machine, were to affirm Ho's humanity & integrity, every relatively pacific anarchist would...

Would nothing. Foxy Granpa's gone. We've got to do our own homework now. Hare Krishna, A.J. HARE KRSNA, HARE KRSNA, KRSNA KRSNA, HARE HARE: HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE.

—Jackson Mac Low

Right: Miriam Levine, A.J. Muste, and Judith Malina in Hiroshima sitdown at AEC Building, New York City, August 1963. —Photo by Neil Haworth.
Below: A.J. Muste enters Russian Mission to U.N. to protest resumption of nuclear testing, New York City, May 1962.

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FOR

misery and desperation during the Depression, you saw that it was the radicals, the Left-wingers, the people who had adopted some form of Marxist philosophy who were doing something about the situation, who were banding together for action, who were putting up a fight. Unless you were indifferent or despairing, you lined up with them.

Muste helped organize numerous strikes, among them the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo, 1934, and the 1936 Goodyear Tire strike in Akron, in which the sit-down technique was first used. In 1934 he also effected a merger of the CPLA with the Trotskyists, led by James Cannon. The resultant Workers Party of America was shortlived. In 1936 Muste went to Europe. He met Leon Trotsky, but returned to the United States a pacifist. From 1937 to 1940 Muste was director of the Presbyterian Labor Temple on New York's Lower East Side. In August 1940, with war clouds darkening the horizon, he became executive secretary of the F.O.R., a position he held until his retirement in 1953, when he became secretary emeritus.

It was in 1940 that Muste stood up at a Quaker meeting and testified, "If I can't love Hitler, I can't love at all." Later he was to make similar statements about Communists and American racists. But he was careful to define his meaning of the word "love." Writing about Communists in 1956, he said,

> As Christians—or on other grounds—in our personal and other relations, Communists are to us human beings, members of the one human family, children of God. We are to love them, but I do not take this to mean that we have to work with them politically or be sentimental and naive about certain aspects of their behavior and strategy. To love a fellow man does not require that we cooperate with him in lying or exploiting others or some other evil thing. It requires the opposite, that we do not cooperate in these things, that we do not let him live, if he is so living, under the delusion that these things are good. It means that we love him even while he does evil, believe that he is capable of redemption, try to call on "that God in him." To love, to be truly human, is always to deal with others on the basis of reality.

During the darkest days of the McCarthy Era, Muste was one of the few non-Communists to keep a dialogue open with the Communists. He did so not only as a civil libertarian but on a personal level, as a fellow human being.

Muste opposed the United States' entry into World War II, but he also opposed such isolationist organizations as the America First movement. During the war he worked with the more than 12,000 Conscientious Objectors in prison or interned in Civilian Public Service Camps. At first he supported the government-run camps on the assumption that they would enable C.O.'s to do constructive and humanitarian work. When this proved not the case, he led the F.O.R. out of the administrative council of the camps, adopting the radical pacifist stance of complete noncooperation with conscription, a position he articulated in his essay, "Holy Disobedience."

As executive secretary of the F.O.R., Muste had a profound effect on the initiation of the nonviolent civil rights movement which matured in the late 1950's and early '60's. CORE was founded in 1944 under the aegis of the F.O.R. and led by F.O.R. staff members working in close consultation with Muste. Two of these, James Farmer and Bayard Rustin, became major leaders of the civil rights movement in its period of great growth and national impact. Other leaders including Martin Luther King and groups such as SNCC and SCLC were greatly influenced by Muste in their adoption of nonviolence as a tactic and a way of life. Impressed by the political success of Gandhi in India, he took the Gandhian concept of Satyagraha—"soul force"—and placed it in an American context.

Muste's influence on the civil rights movement was mainly of a germinal nature. His effect on the peace movement was direct. With the end of World War II, he was one of the earliest exponents of the "third camp" position, placing blame for the Cold War on both the United States and the Soviet Union. He also counselled young men to resist the draft and was one of the founding members of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, becoming its co-chairman in 1947. Beginning in 1948 he refused to pay his federal income tax, and from 1948 to 1953 he was secretary of the Peacemakers.

In 1957 the Committee for Nonviolent Action was organized, with Muste as chairman. Among the most spectacular of CNVA's many demonstrations for peace have been the attempted sailings of the ketch Golden Rule, and of Everyman I, II, and III into the nuclear testing areas of both the United States and Soviet Union. Polaris Action, an ongoing project, dramatized the dangers of Polaris-carrying nuclear submarines. In 1960 and 1961 a CNVA team walked from San Francisco to Moscow, carrying the message of unilateral disarmament all the way to Moscow's Red Square, where a vigil was held. It was largely through Muste's diplomacy that the walkers were able to enter and demonstrate in Poland and the Soviet Union.

The war in Vietnam represented the latest and one of the greatest challenges to A.J. Muste. As dean of American pacifists and one of the few radicals held in esteem by all members of the multi-factioned left, he was propelled into the national leadership of the American antiwar movement, which became larger and more diverse than it had ever been before. His accomplishments in this role were remarkable. Faced with a spectrum from the Maoists to SANE, compelled to deal with Communists, Trotskyists and anarchists who had long ceased speaking to one another, confronted with hip existential activists of the New Left and proper middleclass housewives of Women Strike for Peace and similar groups, Muste's abilities as a reconciler were sorely tested. But if the different groups couldn't trust one another, they could and did trust A.J., and the result was a broad coalition that managed to attain a degree of openness, honesty, and integrity that had long been absent on the American left.

The last year of Muste's life was one of his busiest. Now 81 years of age but retaining all his faculties and a remarkable amount of energy, he travelled with a CNVA group to South Vietnam and demonstrated against the war in the streets of Saigon. He also continued to lead the coalition peace movement in New York City as chairman of the Fifth Avenue Parade Committee.

When North Vietnam opened its doors to American visitors, Muste was one of the first to go—his second trip to Vietnam in the year. He spent ten days in North Vietnam, talking to the people and to the leaders of both the NLF and of North Vietnam, including Ho Chi Minh.

—Martin Jezer

Source: Nat Hentoff, Peace Agitator, Macmillan, 1963.

A.J. Muste and Ross Anderson at the Omaha Missile base, 1959.

■ Those of us involved in the large peace demonstrations of the past few years, in which tens of thousands have marched and hundreds have volunteered for arrest, have a hard time remembering that such events have a very recent genesis. Just ten years ago, civil disobedience protests against militarism were the province of a mere handful of people.

A. J. Muste has been the central figure of this growth. While a large number of conscientious objectors chose prison in World Wars I and II, the idea of pacifists actively confronting militarism on its own ground had its real start in the U.S. in 1957.

As chairman of the group that became the Committee for Nonviolent Action, A.J. was frequently in the front line of the action and always present as major strategist, fund-raiser, and reconciler of differences. His work in this role has been absolutely vital in the development of a movement that has included conservative Quakers and other religious pacifists, angry young artists and Marxists, traditional liberals, and New Left students. While many others have criticized, attempted to scuttle, or resigned in anger when a proposed action did not conform to their particular standards, A.J. always supported any antiwar action he considered responsible. If he felt a proposal was deficient, but found its enthusiasts determined, he would give it his support and work to improve it through persuasion—and very often his personal participation.

The handful of pacifists who gathered at the Nevada testing ground in 1957 to pit their bodies against the atomic bomb, the crew of the Golden Rule who sailed into the Pacific the following year, hoped they were starting a movement that would replace militarism with the nonviolent defense of freedom. I very much doubt that even those actions would have occurred without A.J., and certainly the painful growth of the antiwar movement would have been far more painful without his constant ministration. If the movement does in time succeed, it will owe a vast debt to A.J. Muste.

"Our sole safeguard against the very real danger of a reversion to barbarism is the kind of morality which compels the individual conscience, be the group right or wrong. The individual conscience against the atom bomb? Yes, there is no other way." (LIFE Magazine, August 20, 1945) —Neil Haworth

■ I first worked closely with A.J. during the Omaha Action project in the summer of 1959. Born and raised in Chicago and the Middle West, I looked with suspicion on A.J. because he came from New York, which symbolized corruption, and talked about politics, which seemed to me often irrelevant, or I didn't understand. However, when the controversial project was launched, he remained with it and in the end he committed civil disobedience.

Polaris Action, launched the following summer, stirred even greater controversy among pacifists than did Omaha Action. But in A.J.'s mind there seemed little doubt that Polaris Action could be an effort of high spiritual order and he backed it. By then, I was somewhat grudgingly accepting that he was an exceptional leader, a truly religious man who placed moral rightness and integrity above appearance, respectability, "tone," status, and the power of office, who understood the heart of nonviolence, love, and the principle of the voluntary acceptance of unmerited suffering.

A.J. stood by the San Francisco to Moscow Walk, too. He negotiated tirelessly with Peace Committee officials in the Communist countries. I remember talking with him after he had failed to convince the Russians that they should give us more time to walk in their country. "He flew to Moscow and they gave him nothing; they took away part of what they had granted. Yet, he did his best," I thought. Somehow, he was ennobled in defeat.

A.J. threw his full spirit into the Quebec to Guantanamo Walk. In Atlanta the police threatened to stop the Walk. A.J. executed a brilliant political stroke by arranging to have the Walk begin after a Sunday service by Martin Luther King. The police let us pass. In Albany, the walkers were imprisoned for almost two months, noncooperated and undertook fasts that risked serious injury and perhaps death to several. A.J. led negotiations with city officials that ended the terrible struggle, won the release of the prisoners and a significant victory for civil liberties and nonviolence. I marvelled at his political skills.

Last fall, while studying political power, I was thinking about all the great men I had read about or met in travels throughout the world. It came to me that none combined a greater number of virtues than did A.J. It was an odd but inescapable fact that the tall, stooping, quivering, compassionate gentleman who worked in the office across the way had become the greatest man in the world. History had honored me. I knew him. He was my friend.

A.J., I cannot weep always for you. I will forget. Your life was too full, too creative, too good. You loved too deeply. Admiration and honor for you will more and more replace my grief. Yet I shall always regret that I did not tell you what I had come to know, for you were human and it might have given you that final joy that you had so fully earned.—Bradford Lyttle

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Right: Miriam Levine, A.J. Muste, and Judith Malina in Hiroshima sitdown at AEC Building, New York City, August 1963. —Photo by Neil Haworth.

Below: A.J. Muste enters Russian Mission to U.N. to protest resumption of nuclear testing, New York City, May 1962.

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Top left: Speaking outside Pentagon, June 1965. Photo by Neil Haworth
Top center: Greeting peace walkers released from Albany, Ga. jail, Feb. 1964.
Top right: Meditation before action, Omaha missile base, July 1959.
Lower left: New York street meeting, Aug. 1963. Photo by Neil Haworth
Lower center: Draft card burning, Union Square, Nov. 1965. Photo by Neil Haworth
Lower right: Leading QWG Walk, Mar. 1964

■ There is one moment in which A.J. revealed himself that I will always particularly remember. It was during the trip that five of us made with him last April to protest the war in Saigon. On the last day of that trip, when we tried actually to make our protest, I was very scared for A.J., as well as for myself. For one thing, we had decided not to cooperate with Ky's police when they arrested us; they would have to carry or drag us. None of us had any idea how rough they might be; and A. J. looked so very frail. As it turned out they were gentle with us, but up to the last moment of course one was never sure that the next official to handle us would be gentle. When they had put us finally in a kind of detention room out at the airport—where we were to wait for the departure of the next plane, on which they would send us away—I looked across the room at A.J. to see how he was doing. It was a broiling hot day and we had spent some time just sitting in the paddywagon out under the full sun, and that hadn't been easy for him. I looked across at him and he looked back with a smile, and with that sudden lighting up of his eyes which many of you will remember, and he said, "It's a good life!" That was realism. He had done what he thought had to be done (that trip was above all his idea); and he had done it as well as he knew how; and then—he was able to be happy. What more could he do, until the next time?

* * *

I have sat with him at so very many committee meetings, where after hours it was easy to become dazed by our own endless words about this or that program of action which we might or might not adopt, and easy somehow to forget in the process the realities of the particular situation with which we were supposed to be concerned. And time after time I have seen A.J. at a certain point speak out of his own suddenly renewed sense of that situation, his sharp sense of the real people involved to whom real things were happening. And because it was real to him as he spoke, it would suddenly be real again to everyone in the room.

—Barbara Deming

■ I first knew A.J. Muste in connection with the San Francisco to Moscow Peace Walk. That was five years, almost six years ago. I saw him last a few days before his death, on a snowy Tuesday when he and I and 60 others were arraigned in Criminal Court for disorderly acts in connection with blocking the sidewalk at the entrance to the Whitehall Street army induction center shortly after Hanoi was bombed in December. I spoke with Muste briefly that day... I took my turn on the seat beside him, after several other people took the opportunity of a tete-a-tete with him while the incredibly boring business of the court ate up the day.

How well the man could listen. I was full of the events of the week past that I had been connected with, the Week of the Angry Arts. I came to Muste feeling that I was carrying a bouquet of special beauty and meaning. We—more than 500 proletarians of the arts—had done a thing that Muste had envisaged a couple of years earlier. We had associated ourselves in a wide-ranging set of actions whose point was a declaration of these artists' great antagonism to the war. Muste greeted me when I came over to him with a smile that I had met often before, and never had really understood. It seemed to me the smile of a very shy person, the smile of a gangly 16-year-old. I never knew Muste well; it's possible that that shyness of his, that unreadiness to manage and manipulate a small social oc-

Barbara Deming, Bradford Lyttle, and A. J. Muste at press conference in Saigon, April, 1966. —UPI photo

A. J. Muste —*photo by David McReynolds*

casion, was due to the afflictions of his age. Yet I never found Muste to be backward in enunciating a viewpoint with all clarity and sharpness. He had the coherence of mind and spirit to be very much to the point when something wider than a personal encounter was involved.

Muste listened so well. If a friendly caricaturist were to do a portrait of him, he would exaggerate his ears and his eyes. Do I remember correctly that his eyes were extremely large? What I remember clearly is that his eyes would hold; they seemed to receive a person.

Another style of portraiture would show Muste as we saw him often in these last years, when his hands were palsied with a tremor that shook him from inside, demonstrating on the street in weather as cold as any of us cared to demonstrate in. A thin gray man, gray coat and gray hat. My mind would run through the act of offering him my scarf, but it was awkward to do.

Is it possible that I had only one real conversation with A.J.? I chatted with him many times (and that is a strange thing, that encountering Muste as I often did, he in the center of an important event and myself on the edge of it, I had the feeling of being sought out by his eye, of his wanting me to remember him, to nod at him)...I chatted with Muste many times, but I remember a different conversation with him, when we waited through a long morning in East Berlin. The members of the San Francisco to Moscow Walk team had been thrown out of East Germany because we had been civilly disobedient in insisting that we be allowed to conduct our walk through East Berlin on the weekend when the wall happened to have been erected. The East German government was fed up with us. We were willing to forget about witnessing in East Germany, but wanted to have the right of passage through the country so we could resume our walk in Poland. A Quaker group in East Berlin, with quarters in the ground floor of an old building at the side of a dim courtyard, were our friends and agents in making this new approach to the East German authorities. A.J., Karl Meyer, and I were somehow together that morning, waiting for the decision of the government authorities. And I got involved in a discussion with A.J. about some new currents in philosophy. I was fresh from graduate school at that time, and my intellect was parched by the life of the Walk, as it was then. I remember little of the substance of our talk; but I do remember the delight of it, and my astonishment at finding Muste so well informed, and his mind so extraordinarily young. For he was an old, old man even six years ago.

No pretense, no pretensions. Is it important to think of who will replace Muste in the peace movement that he guided? First of all, I think of what the peace movement has wrought in the six years I have been acquainted with it: it has made vernacular certain positions of social philosophy that were formerly rare and radical. That exists, the incorporation into the vocabulary of social action of a set of aims and practices which are familiar enough not to need definition: civil disobedience, draft refusal, nonviolent resistance, love-power. They are concepts no longer esoteric or alarming, which can yield into action.

If I am right that these are teachings which are already entered in our lives, of what matter is it, besides the personal, that Muste is dead? There is the considerable fact that he was a shrewd man, there is the considerable fact that he was that rare thing, a person without invective. There is the fact of his perseverance... I have wondered sometimes, in the course of a meeting when my attention and interest are flagging, how many thousands and thousands of meetings Muste, sitting at another part of the table, has attended over the last 50 years. These are qualities that enhance a movement; but they are not the characteristics of a king-pin. We may miss Muste's mind and his decency, but it may be that we embody enough of his teaching to begin to be what he meant.—Jules Rabin

A. J. Muste after being arrested at the Army Induction Center at Whitehall Street, New York City, December 15, 1966. —*photo by Eli Finer*

■ A.J.—a great guy. A real great guy. A kind of guy who inspired me in his quiet way without my knowing that it was happening.

But it wasn't always like that—at least that's not the way it all began. As a matter of fact, in my book A.J. had two strikes on him from the beginning. I remember hearing about A.J. when I was in prison during World War II. He really didn't rate with the radical pacifists... A.J. was too conservative. The first time I remember seeing him was in prison when some of us were on a hunger strike. A.J. had come to negotiate with the warden. I wasn't impressed because I felt that he didn't back us up enough. Then I remember in 1956 when Liberation Magazine got started. Some of the editors had doubts that A.J. would fit in with the younger people, that he was not radical enough.

Well, that's the way it was then. But the last decade of his life answered all the doubts about who he really was.

A.J. had balance—I think that's the word. He was at home in a meeting making a brilliant analysis or at a baseball game cheering a great play. I remember one of those interminably long evening meetings, near the end of which everything seemed bogged down and confused. Someone asked A.J. if he would bring things together. Well, A.J. started talking, and in a brilliant summation brought the whole matter into a clear focus. He was a genius at that.

That's the way it was at meetings. At the baseball game, he was right in there all the time. The last game we saw together was at Shea Stadium last season with the Mets playing the Pirates. A terrible start—the Mets trailed by seven runs in the early innings, but A.J. stayed right in there cheering all the way and the Mets came on to win the game. A.J. lost his hat several times during the excitement. At one point the Pirates put in a relief pitcher, and A.J. immediately knew he was a lefthander and what his win and lost record was! I thought that I was a baseball fan, but A.J. was 'way ahead of me—even though he had a million more things to do than me.

I'll miss A.J. walking past the desks at 5 Beekman Street. At meetings. At baseball games. In life.

A real great guy. —Ralph DiGia

Rabbi Feinberg, A. J. Muste and Bishop Reeves being greeted by Ho Chi Minh.

■ Not long ago WIN had the choice of either folding or expanding into a national publication with CNVA support. Choosing expansion brought problems; some of our ideas were at odds with traditional CNVA attitudes. WIN was accused of being run by East Village hippies. But A.J. supported us, and CNVA assumed the economic burden and a share of the editorial headaches.

Then we received a scene from Tuli Kupferberg's play Caught in the Act. In it a draft-card burner used words that hadn't appeared before in CNVA literature. It was accepted by a rump editorial session, but the typist (an editor) went limp on it when she read it. Crisis. Emergency meeting. Call in A.J.

The work was read aloud and we all turned in his direction. But A.J. was playing it cool. "Oh, you want me to comment." Perfect innocence, a twinkling eye. Then a long pause. He looked around the room, at young, at middle-aged, at beards and jeans and suits and ties. "Well, to tell the truth," he said at last, "it didn't exactly arouse me... I kept waiting for the bad parts."

He went on to criticize it by his own standards of literature. Then he left it to us, as always, to decide whether or not to publish. (We did.)

When A.J. returned from North Vietnam, he promised us an exclusive article about his trip. He was planning to write it the weekend he died, and it was to have appeared in this issue. —The Editors

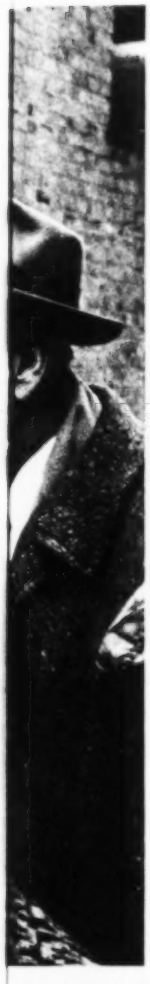
■ Liberalism responds in strange ways when it bumps into radical pacifism. I encounter these extraordinary responses all the time here in New London, Connecticut. But what I'm thinking about right now are some reactions to A.J. Muste along about 1960 when Polaris Action was just beginning to bite into this community. I'm not talking about the peculiar responses of the ministers of God's works in southeastern Connecticut to their visiting colleague, the Reverend A.J. Muste. Even the response of the local banker to seeing a sudden efflux of checks from my account to the Committee for Nonviolent Action is only peripherally related to the issue.

Still, it was this observation by the banker and his reaction to it that started the sequence that I am trying to write about. The banker acted on his own true-blue patriotic bias by conveying, to the president of the college where I teach, his inside information that I was consorting with pacifists—such as A.J.—even to the extent of giving them money. It just happened that I had recently shared a windfall of a few hundred dollars equally between the college and the pacifists. It also just happened that the president of the college had known A.J. at the time he had taken his first step of active opposition to war, back in 1918.

The college president was Rosemary Park, a very good academic administrator; also, she is one of the best all-around liberals I have ever known.

That afternoon in the fall of 1960 she really only intended to thank me for a minor gift to the college's fund drive. I've never figured out just why she went on to tell me of the banker's impropriety in telling her of my checks to the pacifists. Whatever her reason, it did lead her to reminiscence about A.J. during World War I.

She would have been about eight or ten years old at the time, and she knew A.J. because her father was the minister of the congregation adjacent to A.J.'s in the Boston suburbs. She described to me her schoolgirl reactions to that skinny, intense Dutchman whose



Top left: Speaking outside Pentagon, June 1965. Photo by Neil Haworth
Top center: Greeting peace walkers released from Albany, Ga. jail, Feb. 1964.
Top right: Meditation before action, Omaha missile base, July 1959.
Lower left: New York street meeting, Aug. 1963. Photo by Neil Haworth
Lower center: Draft card burning, Union Square, Nov. 1965. Photo by Neil Haworth
Lower right: Leading QWG Walk, Mar. 1964

■ There is one moment in which A.J. revealed himself that I will always particularly remember. It was during the trip that five of us made with him last April to protest the war in Saigon. On the last day of that trip, when we tried actually to make our protest, I was very scared for A.J., as well as for myself. For one thing, we had decided not to cooperate with Ky's police when they arrested us; they would have to carry or drag us. None of us had any idea how rough they might be; and A. J. looked so very frail. As it turned out they were gentle with us, but up to the last moment of course one was never sure that the next official to handle us would be gentle. When they had put us finally in a kind of detention room out at the airport—where we were to wait for the departure of the next plane, on which they would send us away—I looked across the room at A.J. to see how he was doing. It was a broiling hot day and we had spent some time just sitting in the paddywagon out under the full sun, and that hadn't been easy for him. I looked across at him and he looked back with a smile, and with that sudden lighting up of his eyes which many of you will remember, and he said, "It's a good life!" That was realism. He had done what he thought had to be done (that trip was above all his idea); and he had done it as well as he knew how; and then—he was able to be happy. What more could he do, until the next time?

* * *

I have sat with him at so very many committee meetings, where after hours it was easy to become dazed by our own endless words about this or that program of action which we might or might not adopt, and easy somehow to forget in the process the realities of the particular situation with which we were supposed to be concerned. And time after time I have seen A.J. at a certain point speak out of his own suddenly renewed sense of that situation, his sharp sense of the real people involved to whom real things were happening. And because it was real to him as he spoke, it would suddenly be real again to everyone in the room.

—Barbara Deming

■ I first knew A.J. Muste in connection with the San Francisco to Moscow Peace Walk. That was five years, almost six years ago. I saw him last a few days before his death, on a snowy Tuesday when he and I and 60 others were arraigned in Criminal Court for disorderly acts in connection with blocking the sidewalk at the entrance to the Whitehall Street army induction center shortly after Hanoi was bombed in December. I spoke with Muste briefly that day... I took my turn on the seat beside him, after several other people took the opportunity of a tete-a-tete with him while the incredibly boring business of the court ate up the day.

How well the man could listen. I was full of the events of the week past that I had been connected with, the Week of the Angry Arts. I came to Muste feeling that I was carrying a bouquet of special beauty and meaning. We—more than 500 proletarians of the arts—had done a thing that Muste had envisaged a couple of years earlier. We had associated ourselves in a wide-ranging set of actions whose point was a declaration of these artists' great antagonism to the war. Muste greeted me when I came over to him with a smile that I had met often before, and never had really understood. It seemed to me the smile of a very shy person, the smile of a gangly 16-year-old. I never knew Muste well; it's possible that that shyness of his, that unreadiness to manage and manipulate a small social oc-

Barbara Deming, Bradford Lyttle, and A. J. Muste at press conference in Saigon, April, 1966. —UPI photo

A.J. Muste addresses Fifth Avenue Parade Committee rally in Central Park, March 1966. —photo by Eli Finer

■ I was in Cleveland when someone came running up and said, "We just got a call, A.J. is dead." And I said, "Whoever is starting rumors about A.J. being dead must also have started that rumor about God."

I met A.J. up in the office a night or so after he came back from Hanoi. Now, most of us have excuses: you know, "I'm tired, I'm old, I can't do it right now, how about tomorrow." But that old man stayed up almost the whole night writing up a call for the Spring Mobilization. He was working, involved, giving everything he had, to say to the people of the world, "You are brothers." And most of us half his age get worried we're going to get old and starve to death. That's why most of us don't get anything done; we're sitting around scheming how we're going to get more money, more clothes in our closets, thinking we're going to be naked tomorrow.

We were sitting around at a meeting of the Mobilization Committee that day and A.J. asked how much money we had in the treasury, and the treasurer said none. A. J. turned to his secretary and said, "Take what we've got and put it in their treasury. We won't need it, because we're working with God." But most of us don't understand that. We think we can clap our hands and get peace. McNamara has 400,000 troops in Vietnam killing folks and the government's spending more than 30 billion a year there and we think we can clap our hands and give a dollar and get peace.

One of the things that is most disgusting to me is that people like A.J. live and most of us don't ever really understand what they're really like. I remember when my mother died. My sisters were walking around, trying to save some old shoes, old dresses, old pocketbooks that she had. And I said, "Don't save junk." They thought that some old shoes was what she was about, things they could keep and get hung up about. And most of us don't understand what A.J. was about, at all. You see, he understood, and Gandhi understood, and Jesus understood—that all men should be brothers: that they should live together in peace. A.J. went around trying to remove the barriers that separate men. When he was in Hanoi he had the courage to say to Ho Chi Minh, as he said to Johnson in America, "You know something? I've got good news; you guys are brothers. And you shouldn't go around murdering children. That won't solve your problems." When he was there, A.J. in addition had to deal with the problem of having people say about him, "There goes that low-down white imperialist." And back here in America, he had people who said, "He must be a Communist." But he had the courage to say to LBJ and Ho Chi Minh, "You guys are brothers." And that's what that man was about.

We say A.J. is dead and the tragedy is that most of us don't understand the process of life. We say A.J. is dead but anybody who was caught up in the process of bringing people together can never die.

A.J.'s not dead. People working; people creating; people trying to get people together so we can end the war: that's A.J. He isn't dead. In the Old Testament language, the prophets would say, "He walked away with God."

—James Bevel

Committee for Nonviolent Action
5 Beekman St., Rm. 1033, New York, N.Y. 10038

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WIN is published by the Committee for Nonviolent Action and the New York Workshop in Nonviolence. Editors: Gwen Reyes, managing editor, Henry Bass, Maris Cakars, Gordon & Mary Christiansen, Len Fetzer, Neil Haworth, Nancy & Martin Jezer, Paul Johnson, Jackson Mac Low, Mark Morris, Don Newton; Bonnie Stretch; & Eric Weinberger, business manager.

A. J. in His Own Words: "DISOBEDIENCE BECOMES IMPERATIVE"

Non-conformity, Holy Disobedience, becomes a virtue and indeed a necessary and indispensable measure of spiritual self-preservation, in a day when the impulse to conform, to acquiesce, to go along, is the instrument which is used to subject men to totalitarian rule and involve them in permanent war. To create the impression at least of outward unanimity, the impression that there is no "real" opposition, is something for which all dictators and military leaders strive assiduously. The more it seems that there is no opposition, the less worthwhile it seems to an ever larger number of people to cherish even the thought of opposition. Surely, in such a situation it is important not to place the pinch of incense before Caesar's image, not to make the gesture of conformity which is involved, let us say, in registering under a military conscription law. When the object is so plainly to create a situation where the individual no longer has a choice except total conformity or else the concentration camp or death; when reliable people tell us seriously that experiments are being conducted with drugs which will paralyze the wills of opponents within a nation or in an enemy country, it is surely neither right nor wise to wait until the "system" has driven us into a corner where we cannot retain a vestige of self-respect unless we say NO. It does not seem wise or right to wait until this evil catches up with us, but rather to go out to meet it—to <u>resist</u>—before it has gone any further.

—photo by Harry Ring

It is of crucial importance that we should understand that for the individual to pit himself in Holy Disobedience against the war-making and conscripting State, wherever it or he be located, is not an act of despair or defeatism. Rather, I think we may say that precisely this individual refusal to "go along" is now the beginning and the core of any realistic and practical movement against war and for a more peaceful and brotherly world. For it becomes daily clearer that political and military leaders pay virtually no attention to protests against current foreign policy and pleas for peace when they know perfectly well that when it comes to a showdown, all but a handful will 'go along" with the war to which the policy leads. All but a handful will submit to conscription. Few of the protesters will so much as risk their jobs in the cause of "peace." The failure of the policy-makers to change their course does not, save perhaps in very rare instances, mean that they are evil men who want war. They feel, as indeed they so often declare in crucial moments, that the issues are so complicated, the forces arrayed against them so strong, that they "have no choice" but to add another score of billions to the military budget, and so on and on. Why should they think there is any reality, hope or salvation in "peace advocates" who when the moment of decision comes also act on the assumption that they "have no choice" but to conform?

Precisely on that day when the individual appears to be utterly hopeless, to "have no choice," when the aim of the "system" is to convince him that he is helpless as an individual and that the only way to meet regimentation is by regimentation, there is absolutely no hope save in going back to the beginning. The human being, the child of God, must assert his humanity and his sonship again. He must exercise the choice which no longer is accorded him by society, which, "naked, weaponless, armourless, without shield or spear, but only with naked hands and open eyes," he must create again. He must understand that this naked human being is the one <u>real</u> thing in the face of the machines and the mechanized institutions of our age. —A.J. Muste

Excerpted from "Holy Disobedience," an essay first written in 1952. It appears in full in <u>The Essays of A.J. Muste</u>, edited by Nat Hentoff.